

A
SALUTATION
TO THE
CHURCH
OF
GOD
The Spouse of
CHRIST

Coming out of the
Wilderness leaning upon Her
B E L O V E D.

And more particularly to the Young and
Tender Members of Her Body.

By one who travels in Spirit for the Preservation of
Peace and Love, and Unity among the Children
of God,

William Loddington.

L O N D O N,
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Ruth Jackson

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A Salutation to the Church of
God, the Spouse of Christ
coming out of the Wilderness,
leaning upon Her Beloved.

Righteous Household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner stone! The Lord thy God which hath gathered thee from the barren Mountains, and fitly framed thee into an holy Building, hath in free Love and mercy been pleased, (Blessed be his name) to let me see in my latter dayes, a glimpse of thy Beauty, and to tast of thy Heavenly bread and living Water, sealed up from impure Hearts, and inclosed as a Garden from the wild Beasts of the Forrests.

THis Morning being the 4 of the 2 Mo. in the year 1682. even by break of day, The sence of my Mercies, and thy Sorrows and Exercises, O Woman cloathed with the Sun, came so powerfully within me,
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that

that they kindled a Desire to salute thee, and thy tender Children on this wise, before I put off this my Earthly Tabernacle which in course of nature cannot be long.

But as I write, an inward kind of shame and dejectedness arises from the thought of my former unkindness to thee, and would as it were cloud the Light, and stop my Spirit, from this manifestation of my Love. Not that I ever openly persecuted thee in railing Words or violent Actions; No I may rather say, I was, as many now are, among the Number of thy more subtil and dangerous opposers, who under pretence of *Gospel Ordinances*, *Christs Commands*, and *Scripture Examples*, do the more hurt, and grieve thy Spirit more than a profane Enemy. I verily thought in my young Zeal for God thirty years ago, that I might have done some things against thee: for I feared then, thy chief and *Principal Members*, were Deceivers, I could not relish their Doctrine of beating swords into Plow shares, and Pikes into pruning Hooks, in that day. But I obtained mercy, because I disputed and argued ignorantly against thee, being covered with that vail, which is this day over the Hearts of many in reading the Writings of Christ
and

and his Apostles, as it was over the Hearts of many of old in reading *Moses* and the Prophets.

But the Lord thy God, glory to his name, hath rent much of the vail, and in mercy given me a sence of another kind of warfare and other Weapons, which wound the Beast-like Nature, and carnal *Spirit* incurably. Now I feel thy Wisdom, and my own Weakness, thy Wisdom, or rather the Wisdom given thee from above is first pure, and can by no means defend or contend for any unjust or unholy thing, for profit, Honour, or affections sake. It is also peacable, loving and kind, even to its Enemies: not rendring *Evil*, for *Evil*; but Blessing for railings. O little flock! Thou art easy to be entreated. Some of thy own professed *Friends* know it to be true. How tender have I seen thee, in admonishing, intreating and reprovng, when an airy, conceited, unruly Spirit, has entred them. O thou beloved of the Lord! Thou art beautiful within: And thy order is comely, wrought by the heavenly Wisdom, and not of Fragments and threads of mans Invention.

How dothy envious and subtil Adversaries fret and chafe to see thee travelling in good order, even as an Army with Banners: Yea, there is a fear seizeth them to see thee walk wisely, 1 Sam. 18. 15. Hence arise so many endeavours so many devises to disorder thy Camp, and so to weaken thy Hands in thy *Spiritual Warfare*. Sometimes profane high Spirits assault and carry away thy outward *Substance*, abuse thy Friends and Imprison them often unto Death. But when this roaring Lyon sees he cannot hurt thee, then he craftily transformshimself into an Angel of Light. And here I feel my Heart and Life concern'd for thy young and tender Babes, whose years in this World, as well as in Truth, have been but few. These are in greater danger than those of full Age, who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, Heb. 5. 14. These are soonest allured with fine Words, especially when spoken by such as call themselves the *Christian Friends*, and can be as bold as *Hannaniah*, Jer. 28. 3. saying, *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel*, when he saies no such matter, and under pretence of breaking the Yoke of *Babylon*, in a heat endeavour to break off the Yoke of Christ thy Husband.

Dear

Dear young Sons and Daughters of New Jerusalem, now coming down from God out of Heaven, having no need of Sun or Moon, for the Lord God is the *Light* thereof; keep to this *Light* and it will keep you within the walls of this holy City. I know there is a deceitful voice abroad, calling you out, while it bids you look within, promising Liberty, it self being a Servant of corruption; crying out against you Elder Brethren and Sisters sometimes as *Babel Builders*, it self being in my understanding but a *Painted Virgin Daughter of Babilon*, Isa. 47. 1. And sometimes as Apostates, while it self is introducing an Apostacy from the first Principles of *Truth*, seeking to limit the holy one of *Israel* under colour of keeping to that which first convinced you. It may not be unservicable to tell you my own experiences of Gods Love in this very particular. I had fell into the Snare, if the Lord had not stay'd me. Let high *Spirits* esteem it a reproach to acknowledge any weakness; *There is great peace in doing it*, Psal. 32. 3. (Provided it be not done for any fear or favour of Man) but in a true sence of mercy in the deliverance.

When I first heard Some among us, of no mean gifts as I thought, and for whom I had

more than common affection, cry out against *Impositions*, *Innovations*, and formalities I confess it made a great impression upon me, having an old fixed *Zeal* in me against all *Persecution* for *Conscience* sake. So the *Testimonies against Forms*, (*Persecution* generally springing from dead *Forms*) was so taking and pleasant, that I did not in the least mistrust, any such *Snake as Anarchy* lay hid under these *flowers of Truth*, wherefore in true affection to a true *Christian Liberty* I writ to some *Friends*, among whom I observed somethings, that I mistrusted had a tendency to *Imposition*, and I worded it high with them to prevent all *Appearances* of that Evil. And though I can truly say this was the utmost of my *Intention*, yet some began to fear I was running into *Separation* and *Confusion*. But I was in peace mistrusting *Nothing*, till I felt a wrong *Spirit* catching at it, and about to make a further use of it, yea and applying in *Print* (unknown to me) somethings against *Friends*, which I had writ against *Po-pery*, then I began to doubt some wrong thing was at work in me also, and that I was not well informed.

And then I began more narrowly to mind and observe the *Spirits* on both sides, and in the

the *Light* and *Measure* of *Gods Wisdom* given to me, to search to the *Root* of the *Matter* (laying aside personal charges and discharges) and was satisfied. So the Lord will by degrees enlighten and satisfie all whose hearts in *Simplicity* are singly bent to honour him, and will keep them from wandering either to the *right hand* or the *left*. The *left hand* Tryalls viz. *Persecutions* of open *Enemies*, to bring you back to weak disanull'd *Forms* and *Elements*, I do not much fear. The *right hand* *Snarés* take most. These are laid by such as pretend to be in the right way, for *God*, for *Christ*, for *Scripture*, yea for the *Doctrin* of our *Day*, *The Light within*. And here the *Enemy* of your *Peace* and *Unity* has crept in, under a specious pretence against *Forms*, *Orders* and *Impositions* to divide and lay wast, by opposing good *Order* and *Government*. But dear *Friends*, know there was never any gathering of *People* though into the *Power* of *Godliness*, but they had also a form or *Order*, though many have had the form without the *Power*. It's true, the form to the *Power* may be valued but as the shell to the *Kernell*: Yet we know the shell is servicable in its place, and therefore not to be neglected or spoiled. The leaves of the tree of life have a service, though not so much as the fruit.

Stand

Stand fast therefore in the living *Power* and form of *Godliness* which you are already convinced of. And if any thing as yet be hid from you, the *Lord* in due time will reveal it, if you keep *Faithful*, *quiet*, *meek*, and tender under your own. Do nothing in bare *Imitation*, I know it will hardly stand a *Tryal* for a little profit, much less a *Fiery Tryal*. Wait to feel a real service for God in what you do. There is no insignificant needless things in the house of God; though some things may seem to be so at the first *View* to many as they did to me.

Hence arises the great cry against *Innovations*, that is, making new orders, forms, and changes. But though the design in this Cry is to reproach Truth: Yet *Wisdom* ever was and will be justified of her *Children*. They know that the Spirit of the Lord may now as well as formerly make *Circumstances* of *Order* and *Government*, suitable to the present *Occasions* and *Services* of Truth. And *Submission* to these things, cannot properly be called *Submissions* to men (there lies the Common mistake) but to the *Spirit* of the Lord in them. And this is *Christs Spiritual Government* or *Government* by his Spirit over the Spirits of his People. Here is no ruling by outward

ward force and violence, but by an inward power and *Authority* which the Lord gives to some according to his own *Will*, as it is written, some to be *Apostles*, some *Prophets*, some *Teachers*, some helps and *Governments*, (*Helpers in Governing*) and all for edifying the *Body of Christ*, Eph. 4. 12. 1 Cor. 12. Were this *Government* well understood, all would be contented in their *Places* the Lord hath set them, in all whisperings and evil surmisings would cease. There would be an universal bearing one anothers *Burdens*, and so fulfilling the *Law of Christ*.

Little Children it arises in me to remind you of what is written 1 *John*. 2. 19. That such as go from us, are not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. I can never believe such have a right *Spirit* renewed within them, that prefer not *Jerusalem* above their chief Joy *Psal*. 137. 6. If they had had but any true sense of the publique Scandals of open *Enemies* of the private mournings and heart-breaking Sorrows of their dear tender *Friends*, of the stumbling Block in the way of *Friendly*, sober inquiring *People*, all which certainly follows and falls heavy upon Separation, they durst never have acted and Printed what I have

have read. Away with all Pretenders to Truth, that are not tender of its Honor.

But what is the Substance (if any of you should inquire) of all these *Out-cries* and *Complaints* ? In short, men are exalted and women are exalted. In true Love I desire every such *Complainers* to search narrowly into himself to see if there be nothing in him that thinks it self not high enough esteemed, and therefore pecks at others. Surely no *Professor* of our blessed self denying Principle dare like *Herostroius*, fire a *Temple* to get a *Name*. Yet formerly I as little thought such as threw down *Lordly power*, would have made themselves *Lords*, as some now will be men of War, who in *derision* call others *G. F's* men of War. But how are men and women exalted ? By meeting apart: By having *General Meetings*, to look to the well ordering of things among particular Meetings; What hurt can be in all this. As to the first, consider which Women are most exalted, and as it were eclipse the *Head-ship* of the man; Whether those that desire to sit, and are taken in to sit in equal power and freedom to speak and act, *Pro* and *Con*, among the men in all *Businesses*; Or those Women, who meet by themselves, ordering all matters among

mong themselves, suitable and proper for them, according to the Wisdom of God given to them, and all in *Submission* to and with the consent and unity of the mens *Meetings*. Methinks this very *Consideration* is enough to satisfy any rational impartial Man. And as to the *General Meeting*, What Evil has it done? Nay have not *Friends* generally had great both *Spiritual* and *Temporal Advantages* thereby *Pure Reason* and *Scripture* teach, that the more Counsel, the greater safety; even as the more *Lights* gathered together make the greater *Light*. I know no visible thing not liable to corruption; but methinks they that disliked this order, at first should and would if they had been of a *right Spirit* have kept their place, and proposed another more servicable to *Truth*, and less liable to be tainted, and then no doubt others would have felt unity with them: But it plainly argues a *Contentious Spirit* to find fault with what it cannot mend.

I know the matters pretended to be in *Controversy*, relating to *Order*, are but as *mint* and *Cummin* if compared to the great and weighty Concerns of *Truth*, which ought especially to be done, yet the other not to be left undone.

In

In *Math. 23. 23.* *Judgment, Mercy and Faith* are recorded for the weighty things of the *law*, Now put these to tryal. How can he say he is for *Judgment* that despises the *Judgment* of his *Brethren* assembled in the *Power* and *Wisdom* of *God* to give it? How is he for *mercy*, that for a thing indifferent (according to his own *Opinion*) will *Sacrifice Truth* it self, and expose all its *Friends* to the rage of an *Ignorant violent Enemy*? What *Faith* is that which would live in a latitude to temporize with all; to have more names than the *Fathers* written upon its *Fore-head*? *Pure Nature* will not suffer any *Vine* to bring forth the *Fruit* or *Leaf* of a *Bramble*. O the great abuse this day of that precious *Privilege, Liberty of Conscience*! How many of an evil *Conscience*, will talk fluently for its *Liberty*? How many strain it for advantage as if they would have it signifie, to be of any *Religion*, and therefore are fierce against any visible *Gesture* or *Form*, that may distinguish them from others, crying out, *Imposition, Formality, Ceremony, Human Inventions, mans Orders, &c.*

In tender *Love* I desire some would but Consider, how short they fall of the *Judgment* and *Reason* of men of more inferiour
 Prin-

Principles, than what they pretend to. Hear what the Author of *A seasonable Discourse against Popery*, saies, Printed by H. Broom, page 35. *What conversation can there be with these men (speaking of the Jesuits) who are under no obligations of Society, no Character of notice or distinction, who at the same time are Priests and Hectors, Casuists and Artificers, Presbyters, Ana-baptists, Quakers, (and why not Episcopalians too) Theists, Atheists, and amidst all these very good Catholicks. Let any sober man, saies he, judge what kind of Religion this is in it self, and how fit to be encouraged and submitted to.—*

Thus dear young Friends, you may see how this kind of liberty is condemned by rational men, as unfit for Society among them, much more among you. Lord God of purity, Peace and Heavenly Order preserve you, that we may all strive together, and not assunder for the Faith and sound form of the Gospel, *Phil. 1. 27.*

If now any of you should desire to know what I understand by that liberty of Conscience, which many, and I among them, have so zealously contended and deeply suffered for. Know in brief, That it is a Liberty for every man to try all things, as the Apostle exhorte; yet not to be alwayes trying, and never satisfied; but when he has tryed
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all, then to hold fast that which in his Conscience he finds best, without being compelled by any outward force or punishment to joyn or worship with any others. And so likewise, that every body, Society, or Congregation of People have the same freedom of their severall religious worships and exercises without persecuting one another; all living in obedience to the *Civil* Laws, that is such as tend to the welfare of outward Concerns. And this is the true just *liberty*; and not a *liberty* for Members of the same Body or Society to differ from each other, in things which destroy their *Character* and *Government* among them. But seeing I am speaking of *liberty* let me mind you of two things more. First of a plea I often meet with, that there are good men and bad of all Religions. And so by consequence secretly insinuating they are all alike: But I hope you easily perceive the Serpents Poison in arguing thus for all Religions, that it is to make Peoples Consciences pliable to any Religion that may come uppermost, or rather indeed to be of no Religion, that so they may shun all sufferings upon Religious Accounts.

Secondly, of a Spirit which thinks to justify its liberty by quoting your ancient Friends, as *Paul* did the *Athenian* Poets for their Authors. *Acts* 17. 28. But

But as the case is different, so I trust the effect will be; for *Paul* quoted the Poets for a right end and prevailed with some: But these, how can they expect to turn you to that which the Author they quote yet living testifies is not the sence of his words, nor the intent of his mind to have you turned unto: To put a wrong Interpretation upon any mans writings, is a very bad sort of Imposition.

Hold fast the profession of your Faith and form of sound words; 2 Tim. i. 13. which you have received in the faith and Love of Christ Jesus; from which some turn away: Of whom are *Phygelus's* that is, such as shun the eye or oversight of their Brethren, and *Hermogenes's*, that is, such as are born of humane Wisdom, 2 Tim. i. 15. Mark what a weighty signification is in these very names, left upon Record for the Churches.

And as for the deceased Friends some instance, one of them viz. *Isaac Pennington* I had often conference with. I have sometimes objected his own sayings, yea and read them over face to face in great affection to vindicate such a Liberty which I then verily thought might consist with Good order. But I must do him right, I never heard him

consent or give any Countenance, but rather a kind of Indignation would arise against my sense of his words, which was the same as some now put upon them. But their actions now make it manifest, they drive at another end than I intended. And I verely believe he felt my Innocency, as some others have done even in my opposing them: for he did not cease coming to me when opportunity served, and when we met, and talked of these differences, his labour still was, that I would lay aside that Wisdom and Reasoning which run me upon those expositions.

I well remember the very place, where once as we were walking and discoursing about Dissenters, I fell to pleading for a *moderation* and compliance with them upon this consideration, that I looked upon them, and the others to be all as Schollars in Christs School; only some were in a higher and others in a lower Class or form. But this Comparison he could not relish, his very Countenance changed at it; and to this purpose he answered, That the difference was far otherwise, and that there was a Spirit quite contrary to Truth, subtly working under their pretences; but a tenderness and bowels

of love and compassion was in him towards the innocent among them.

And I say the Truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness (Glory to thy name O Lord) that I have great heaviness and inward sorrow for my loving Friends still under the like mistake as I was, who yet see not the tendency of the dividing Spirits fine devices. And when I consider what sweet comfort and Spiritual Refreshment we have had together in the service of the Lord; O that life (not death *Psal. 55. 15.*) may seize upon them, saith my soul: that they may walk in the footsteps of Christs little flock, and feed their Kids by his shepherds tents! For why should ye be (O dear Friends) as those that are veiled, turning aside from the flocks of his Companions? Let all thy Children (O God of Peace and love) dayly more and more witness, how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity: And how fitly its compared to the precious Ointment upon *Aarons* head, that ran down to the very skirts of his Garment, viz. to every member of the body: And to the dew of *Hermon*, that descended to all the mountains of Sion, viz. the Meetings of Christ, for there the Lord command

ed (and doth command) the blessing, even
Life for ever, *Psal.* 133.

So, tender hearted Friends, feel the sincerity of my Life in this Salutation, Despise not my *Spiritual youth*, its fresh with unfeigned love (praises to the Lord) and I trust will ever be so, for a Spiritual Unity, without which Truth will not grow. My earthly Tabernacle declines apace, and hastens to its center, but my love to Gods heavenly Building (blessed be his Name) by his power is enlarged; and my Spirit rejoiceth in feeling a Remnant zealous for it, and unanimous in promoting it through all oppositions.

I have seen the fruit of *Discord* among other Gatherings, and what hurt the Spirit of *Diotrephes* has done among them: keep upon your watch, little flock, hold up your hearts and stand in the unity of the heavenly life and *Amaleck* can never prevail. No Weapon formed against you shall prosper; And every thing that would be exalted over you, shall fall: But you that are willing and obedient, even you who in Gods holy Order, are equally willing to obey or to rule, to rule or to obey as he pleaseth to dispose of you, shall

shall eat the good things of his heavenly Land.

So with this I shall conclude desiring you dear young Friends to beware of running too fast; its a great and common temptation in youth. A strong Confidence may spring from the heat of your affection and may press you on to many things, yea even to publique Testimony, beyond your true Measure of Life. I have known and felt this to be true, and have deeply suffered for it. *Peter himself Fell under such a like Confidence, and was convinced, that it was a wrong zeal which made him say, Though all should be offended, yet would not he, Math 26. 33. But he would say so no more, when Christ tried him with a question directly to that purpose, John. 21. 15.*

But I can tell you by experience how you may know when any motion is beyond your Measure. You will certainly feel (as when your bodyes are strain'd beyond their natural strength) a weakness and flatness, or as it were, a damp, fear or fainting will fall upon your Spirits afterwards; especially if by any Friend opposed: But the true Birth and life brings with it, an inward Evidence
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of peace and acceptance with the Lord, and feeling the inward Recompence of reward (not expecting any thing from Man) is bold in speaking or acting what it certainly knows to be just and true; and having so done, is bold and valiant under all opposition against it.

So the God of love, keep you all faithful to your *Measure*, and diligent in your place; all performing your Duties to each other in true humility and tenderness according to Scripture: So shall the Mountain of the *Lords* house be established over of all Mountains, (all Gatherings) and all Nations shall flow unto it, *Isay. 2. 2.*

To thy Name, blessed powerful God of Glory, who hast redeemed us from the Iron furnace, from the *Law* of sin and Death, who art now purifying and gathering to thy self a peculiar People to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, be all the pure thanksgivings and holy praises returned for all thy mercies and favours for Evermore.

One thing more arises, let not this come into the hands of such whom you feel sinning wilfully after they have received the know-

knowledge of Truth, who, like *Sanballet* and *Tobias*, not only scoff at Gods Building, but also do their utmost to hinder it. These will turn again and rent both this and you. But of some in tenderness scrupling have compassion, making a difference. And if this should happen to come to the Eyes of any of my old Friends and Brethren under former Dispensations (for whom I can truly and heartily say I have as much, yea rather more love then ever) who perhaps may look somewhat discontentedly upon it, as a fruit of *Apostacy* from what we formerly believed were *Gods Ordinances* and *Appointments*; let me desire them to consider how they will answer an *Episeopal* man if he charge them with *Apostacy* from their Church, which they verily believe is established upon as plain Scripture proof, as they believe theirs is. And let them further consider, whether they themselves are of the same Judgment in all things as they were trained up in.

I have often feared, That the very thoughts of being upbraided with *Wavering*, *Changing*, *Instability* or the like, is a strong snare to hold many in Bondage under weak and unprofitable forms and Elements.

wish it have no influence upon Some now standing in opposition to *better Things*.

I grant, that to be tossed too and fro (as many were in former quick National Turns from Popery to Protestantcy and back again to Popery) is shamefully childish: But to press forward, and come to clearer manifestations of Christ the Light, as the Lord brings them forth by his Power in every age, is every mans Duty: And if therein he walk faithfully according to his Measure, patiently bearing his cross, he shall receive the Crown of eternal Life. Finally, Brethren, *whatsoever Things are True, whatsoever things are Honest, whatsoever things are Just, whatsoever things are Pure, whatsoever things are Lovely, whatsoever things are of Good Report; if there be any Vertue, if there be any Praise, think on these things.*

W. L.

T H E E N D.



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